Progressive Calvinism

VOLUME I JANUARY, 1955 NUMBER 1

Announcement of Organization of Progressive Calvinism League

We are organizing the Progressive Calvinism League. We shall be pleased if you will give serious thought to our program as outlined in this issue. We hope you will be in agreement with us and will join the League. Joining the League automatically puts you on the mailing list to receive for one year, from January 1955 through December, the League's publication, PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM. *This League is different from anything of which you are a member now. The League will be a pioneer in social thought and research. To belong will be interesting and profitable. A membership blank is enclosed. Join at once and be a charter member.*

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The Character of the Progressive Calvinism League

General Aims of the Progressive Calvinism League

The Progressive Calvinism League has been organized to promote in particular one phase of Christian doctrine and living, namely, the practical, everyday phase which is concerned about two relationships, namely,

(1) the relationship of men to men, and

(2) the relationship of men to things.

We should add that there is the still more important matter of

(3) the relationship of men to God.

But we are not theologians, and although we shall take item (3) very much into account, it is a phase of Christian doctrine and living which we leave primarily to the experts in theology. We are neither theologians nor philosophers.

Let it be sufficient here to say that our over-all outlook regarding the relationship of men to God is determined by the ideas of orthodox Christianity. That is the *general* framework in which we think on *specific* questions about (1) the relation of men to men, and (2) the relation of men to things.

If you ask that this idea be expressed in Biblical terms, we reply by saying that we shall primarily be considering problems coming under the Second Table of the Decalogue, namely, the last six commandments, to honor father and mother, not kill, not commit adultery, not steal, not lie, not covet.

We shall be working in the field of ethics, that is, concerning ourselves about the conduct of each man toward his fellow men. We are interested in what in the academic world is called the *social* sciences. If we were concerned about dead things — metal, rocks, stars, or what have you — then we would be working in the field of the *physical* sciences; or if we were concerned about living things merely as physical organisms, we would be working in the field of the *biological* sciences — zoology, physiology, etc. Beyond theology and philosophy, beyond the physical sciences and the biological

sciences, there is the whole field of human relationships, namely, the *social* sciences, especially political science, political economy, law, and sociology.

Business is one of the activities in the social science field. We are businessmen. We like business. We think practical business solves correctly and naturally many important matters about which professional social scientists have impractical and even dangerous ideas.

We are *practical* social science men. In academic terms we might be called pragmatic social science men. We go by "experience that works well" which is what pragmatic means. We are so "practical" or "pragmatic" that we are suspicious of anything that does not work well. "Success" (correctly understood) is our yardstick.

Now we have discovered several interesting things: (1) that the Hebrew-Christian religion has a head-start, over the modern social sciences, of more than 3,000 years; that is a big lead; (2) that much of what passes today for "social science" is not really science; (3) that, very unfortunately, in order to be "up-to-date" many Christians are giving a borrowed and wholly wrong "social science" interpretation of Christianity; and (4) that *sound* theoretical social science and *practical* experience *both* are in complete agreement with ancient Biblical social science ideas.

So much for the relation of men to men.

But, you ask, why bring in your item (2), that is, the relationship of men to things? The answer is that in a world that has definite limits the relationship of men to men is affected by how much of "things" there is to go around. There is no unlimited supply of things. Socialists, communists, politicians, republicans and democrats, and all the uplift people do not admit that willingly. They all imply or positively promise a future limitless prosperity. As we said, Scripture, through Moses, was 3,300 years ahead of such social science error. Moses declared that there would always be a welfare shortage. We are confident that he was right.

What is our aim? To be successful in this life and to promote the success of others. (1) That requires sound social science

ideas. (2) That means that some ideas of modern so-called social science must be rejected. (3) That means that Biblical ideas on successful living are right and should be practiced and promoted. (4) That means that the identity of true social science and Biblical ethics, without any fantastic interpretations being required, can and should be established. (5) And finally, that also means, because the understanding of the general revelation of God should be progressive, that true modern social science has considerable light to throw on Biblical ethics.

The Hebrew-Christian religion taught a system of morality when society was relatively simple. We now have a complex society. Those ancient primitive Hebrew-Christian principles are not out-of-date. They do not need to be revised or improved. We are convinced that because many Christians, both theologians and laymen, are not trained in the social sciences, therefore they are confused on complex modern social questions and are frequently on the wrong side. Our aim then is to bring to bear on practical everyday questions the identical interpretation and guidance of both ancient Hebrew-Christian ethics and enlightened modern social science. Scripture and science together can help us. We are enthusiasts about both.

Those are our aims. Are you with us? You can help us and encourage us. We will talk the practical language of everyday life. We think we can help clarify each other's thinking. You should be prepared for some mental shocks. You will need an open mind, which is a characteristic of a wise man.

Probably we should add one idea. Why PROGRESSIVE *Calvinism?* For several reasons it might have been well for us to adopt the title, PROGRESSIVE *Christianity*. The various branches of Christendom differ seriously on *theological* doctrines. There is somewhat less disagreement on practical doctrines. The founders of this movement are members of a small Calvinist denomination (Christian Reformed), and it was decided to work in our own "circle" first. We shall be glad to help organize a *Progressive Christianity League,* or a *Progressive Lutheran League,* or a *Progressive Evangelical League,* etc. We do not wish to make a sectarian approach, and we think we are not.

We consider ourselves to be in the most-rigorous Calvinist tradition. We do not, however, believe that John Calvin settled all theological, or political, or social or economic problems. We paraphrase a great author on another subject:

> It has never happened in any other case that the whole of a science was discovered, at the first attempt, even by the greatest genius; and so it is not surprising that the whole of [social science] was not discovered even by [Calvin]. His greatest handicap was that he was a forerunner; our greatest advantage is that we come after. We who are richer by four centuries of work than the founder of [Calvinism], should endeavor to work better than he . . .

Our Methods

Our methods are the methods of a sound society and a sound morality, namely, openness of mind, free discussion, digging into the depths for the truth, plainness of speech. There will be agreement on those methods except maybe the last. "Plainness of speech" may sound unbrotherly. But "plainness of speech" we must have. When we believe an idea to be wrong, we shall analyze it and criticize it and destroy it if we can. Futher, we believe men should be responsible. We shall, therefore, not deal in abstract ideas. We shall refer to the men and the place and the organs through which those men expressed ideas which we consider to be erroneous.

We are expecting criticisms. A man is not entitled to hold an opinion unless he is ready to see it attacked hard, with no pulling of punches. We are more interested in the truth than in our winning an argument. We want no temporary successes in an argument. We are prepared to submit to the final approval of history, and be judged deliberately and slowly and with the benefit of historical perspective, and by the final outcome. We have neither respect nor sympathy for error accompanied by piety, nor for piety accompanied by error, whether it is our error or another's.

In short, our method will be to work over debated questions, or over questions which should be debated. There are plenty of them. In the interest of truth, we shall neither give nor expect quarter. In the discovery of truth we shall not exercise "love" so-

called. We shall exercise love only in the form of patience and forebearance. To consider love (so-called, but what is really a toleration of error) as a substitute for probing for the truth is a vicious idea.

Basic Principles

Plodding effort has gone into preparing a set of basic ideas. They appear in the following Declarations. The Declarations are as plain as we can make them in a brief statement. In various ways they need considerable explanation. Many people, if not most, will promptly say: "I'll agree to them. I see nothing really new in them. Of course, I am against a sickening piety (sanctimoniousness); and I wish to be progressive; and I believe in humility; and in a single standard of morality; and that success generally is a reward of virtue; and I do not wish to discredit what Christianity says about the supranatural by favoring some unsound or silly ideas in regard to the affairs of this world. I'll sign." We shall be delighted if you will sign to become a member.

These six Declarations will be used and re-used by us with steadfast consistency. You may discover that you must change your ideas fundamentally on some specific ethical problems, if you are going to hold consistently to these general Declarations. We shall be exposing as many inconsistencies in popular thinking as we can.

Here are the Declarations an acceptance of which is a requirement for membership in the Progressive Calvinism League:

I hereby declare that as a member of the Progressive Calvinism League, I will boldly and steadfastly

1. (a) Promote brotherly love as required by the Christian religion; and (b) attack all "extensions" of the Scriptural rule which extensions make the rule sanctimonious.

2. (a) Promote the further discovery of the greatness of God, as revealed in nature and in Scripture, by (1) promoting an attitude toward research in the sciences which will be fruitful in results and will inspire men

with humility and awe; and by (2) rejecting the idea that the comprehension of special revelation has been completed; the Scriptures must be reapplied to changing circumstances.

3. (a) Promote awareness of the limitations of the human mind, that is, promote true humility; and (b) resist the arrogance of all attempts at universal planning, that is, all attempts at pretending we are as God, and all Comtian Positivism.

4. (a) Promote a single rule of morality; and (b) reject a dual rule, namely, one rule for individuals and a conflicting rule for groups.

5. (a) Promote confidence that prosperity obtained in a *free* market society is the result of obedience to the law of God; and (b) discontinue all apologies for that prosperity and all policies which will undermine that prosperity.

6. (a) Promote a program for this life (1) which will be distinguishable (antithetical) from a non-faith program, (2) which will bring good temporal results, and (3) which, therefore, cannot discredit Christianity's message in matters beyond this life; and (b) resist all programs borrowed from non-Christian sources which science and experience will reveal as unsound for this life, and which will consequently discredit Christianity's supernatural message.

Brief Explanations of the Declarations

DECLARATION No. 1

(a) Promote brotherly love as required by the Christian religion; and (b) attack all "extensions" of the Scriptural rule which extensions make the rule sanctimonious.

Is there anyone who cannot agree to this Declaration? No communist can; no socialist can; many "Christians" cannot. There are people in rather orthodox Calvinist churches who *on specific problems* select an answer which will conflict with this Declaration.

What does the Declaration mean by "brotherly love" and by an "extension" of the requirement of brotherly love?

The Hebrew-Christian rule of brotherly love is usually summarized as follows: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." We believe it. We promote it. You should not join the Progressive Calvinism League unless you wholeheartedly believe it yourself and live it.

And what is meant by the "extension"? By the "extension" we mean a still "stronger" law of love, namely, "From each according to his ability to each according to his need." That is the way Karl Marx put it, the founder of so-called "scientific socialism" and the father of modern socialism-communism. Probably there are more so-called Christian people in the world who profess to believe that socialist-communist law of love than who profess to believe the Biblical law of love.

The Biblical and the socialist-communist laws of love are irreconcilable and are in mortal conflict. They are not primarily two laws about "love" in varying degrees, with the socialist law having a higher degree of love, and therefore better. The socialist law of love is hyper-pious; it is sanctimonious. It is hypocritical.

The shocking thing is that many who claim the name of Christian interpret the Biblical law of love by means of the socialist-communist law of love.

These men, naturally, reject the "methods" of socialism-communism, namely, violence, oppression, injustice, falsehood; but they do not reject the basic principle of "love" of socialism-communism. These men are as doctors who give no more than morphine for the pain, but are really well pleased with the basic disease, the cause for the pain. There is no future for Christianity if it only attacks the symptoms of socialism-communism and not the evil root. The evil root is the sanctimonious law of love.

In fact, the great attractiveness of the Marxian law of love is, for some, just the fact that it goes *further,* that it demands *more* than the Biblical law of love. They realize that the law is an "extension" of the Biblical law. The more pious, the better they like it. We do not. There is a limit to our piety. We stagger under the load of endeavoring to live according to the Biblical rule. *We* are not good enough ever to be *voluntary* socialists or communists.

DECLARATION No. 2

(a) Promote the further discovery of the greatness of God, as revealed in nature and in Scripture, by (1) promoting an attitude toward research in the sciences which will be fruitful in results and will inspire men with humility and awe; and by (2) rejecting the idea that the comprehension of special revelation has been completed; the Scriptures must be reapplied to changing circumstances.

There is a famous confessional statement, known as the *Belgic Confession,* written by Guido De Bres. Parts of this Confession will be controversial among Christians, but hardly the first two articles. They are:

> ARTICLE I. *There is only one God.* We all believe with the heart and confess with the mouth that there is one only simple and spiritual Being, which we call God; and that He is eternal, incomprehensible, invisible, immutable, infinite, almighty, perfectly wise, just, good, and the overflowing fountain of all good.
>
> ARTICLE II. *By what means God is made known to us.* We know Him by two means: First, by the creation, preservation and government of the universe; which is before our eyes as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to "see clearly the invisible things of God," even "His everlasting power and divinity," as the Apostle Paul says (Romans 1:20). All which things are sufficient to convince men and leave them without excuse. Second, He makes Himself more clearly and fully known to us by His holy and divine Word, that is to say, as far as is necessary for us to know in this life, to His glory and our salvation.

We are here particularly interested in this first "book," called "elegant": that is, the book of "nature." Generally, people will take that to be mountains and oceans, sun, moon and stars, beautiful colors and sounds, the marvelous living world of plants and animals, the laws of physics, chemistry, etc., and the marvels of

the sexes and reproduction. If men must work ceaselessly to accomplish small things, how great must be the Being who made the whole universe! A person who does not believe in a Supreme Intelligence appears to be unrealistic and even not genuinely rational.

It is our view that Scripture is primarily a book of revelation about God; secondly, a book on private morality; thirdly, a book on public morality; fourthly, but in a substantially lesser sense, a book on social science laws; and finally, in a rather limited way, a book in the fields of the biological sciences and of the physical sciences.

In other words, we hold the view of Scripture that it is not a social science textbook, but nevertheless, it is more a social science textbook than it is a physical science textbook. At the same time, we hold that not all social science laws are specifically spelled out in Scripture, and that there is a field of discovery in the social sciences which field is not directly covered by what is taught in Scripture, such matters as the division of labor in society, the financial organization of society, the proper relations between voluntary organizations and the state, etc.

The social sciences have made great gains since the days of Guido De Bres. Insofar as the social sciences have truly discovered laws which govern the organization of society it may be said that through these sciences it is possible to see today more clearly the rules governing a society than was possible in De Bres' days. In that sense, *general* revelation has been progressive.

DECLARATION No. 3

(a) Promote awareness of the limitations of the human mind, that is, promote true humility; and (b) resist the arrogance of all attempts at universal planning, that is, all attempts at pretending we are as God, and all Comtian Positivism.

The famous economist, Adam Smith, one of the greatest benefactors of mankind (but many of whose ideas have needed revision because economic science is also progressive), wrote about society being benefited by a guidance as of "an invisible hand." God? Maybe Smith meant that. A sufficient explanation is that the benefit society gets from (1) freedom, (2) voluntary cooperation, and (3) from the sum total of all human intelligences is

infinitely greater than it can get from "planning" and "coercion" and "guidance" by any single human mind or any dozen or so human minds. Smith's ideas are known philosophically as Individualism. Individualism is a product of humility. Opponents of Individualism are unknowingly humanists. Humanism, in the light of the sovereignty of God, is basically arrogant. Humanists who are opposed to Individualism wish to "rationalize" society by legalized coercion; they will engage in "central planning." Every socialist and communist and many professing Christians believe in the merits of a "planned" (that is a coercive) society which has behind it as boundless arrogance as the builders of the Tower of Babel. The human mind will PLAN where God has failed to plan!

But what are the fruits of such an arrogant evaluation of the human mind. The temporal fruits are confusion, poverty, coercion, oppression, violence, fraud, ruin. ALL *planned* societies are organized contrary to the will of God as outlined in Scripture. There are no exceptions. ALL free societies, if based on the Second Table of the Decalogue, are *unplanned* and prosperous and peaceful. The blessing of God rests on them. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

The "laws" in the *social* sciences are as unalterable as in the physical sciences. But cause and effect operate under different circumstances. In the physical sciences cause and effect are "regular." In the social sciences there are interfering influences and delaying influences. As Solomon says: "Because sentence against an evil work *is not executed speedily* [effect after a cause is delayed] therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Ecclesiastes 8:11). This indicates how the whole epistemology of the social sciences must differ from the epistemology of the physical sciences, which is one reason for the unrealistic social science ideas of some mathematicians, physicists, chemists and other physical scientists. One of the elephantine errors of many Christians who belong to the so-called Christian intellectuals is the inappropriate application of the epistemology of the physical and biological sciences to the social sciences.

Declaration No. 4

(a) Promote a single rule of morality; and (b) reject a dual rule, namely, one rule for individuals and a conflicting rule for groups.

Reinhold Niebuhr, one of the famous theologians in America today who influences the trend of theological thinking as much as any man in America, has indicated that it is moral for society to do what it is immoral for an individual to do (see his *Moral Man and Immoral Society*). This is a vicious principle. It establishes a double standard of morality — one for a man as an individual, and another for a man as a member of a group, a union, a state, a race, a class, or mankind as a whole. It is wrong for a man to steal as an individual, but as a member of American society, which is deliberately inflationary, a man may engage in public stealing every day (by means of inflation)! This is only one of many examples we intend to cite and explain.

The "church" is almost universally silent on all this *public* iniquity. The "church" has retreated. Many churches have no discipline any more against *individual* sins. But in regard to *public* sins, is there one large denomination in all America which concerns itself about them and has a Biblical answer? Or do the answers of the great denominations allow more or less for a double standard of morality? Where there is no personal (private) discipline the church is dead. Where there is no testimony against *public* sins the church is worse than dead; it is a renegade.

And the outcome? As Solomon says about events in the social science field, the effects are "not speedily executed" — it takes time, but they are as sure to come as effects in the physical sciences. And the effects of a dual standard of morality, the effect of the church (by inaction) blessing public sins will be what? The effect on the reputation of the church will be calamitous; the church will be cursed, as apostasy was cursed by the prophets of old — it will be a desolation, a hissing and an execration. Not for nothing is the church generally in disrepute among smart people.

Declaration No. 5

(a) Promote confidence that prosperity obtained in a free market society is the result of obedience to the law of God; (b) discontinue all apologies for that prosperity and all policies which will undermine that prosperity.

The "have-not" nations of the world accuse the "have" nations of being exploiters. The "have" nations are the nominally

Christian nations. Ah! They became rich by iniquity! They are not rich because the morality of the Hebrew-Christian religions permeated them!

All this lack of confidence in the blessings resulting from obedience to the law of God reflects a basic lack of confidence in what the Hebrew-Christian religions teach about the effect of obeying the laws of God. The effect? It is this: prosperity is the sure effect of obedience to the law of God; and adversity is the sure effect of disobedience to the law of God. Almost tiresomely that message occurs as a refrain in Scripture. PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM holds that the rule stated in Scripture is true.

The churches will be ineffective in mission work unless they are willing to declare boldly and loudly that prosperity follows the Christian religion as his shadow follows a man. Why should anyone adopt the Christian religion if it does not pay to do so? It is only a limited comfort for distress in this life to believe in happiness in a future life.

But, it may be said, look at the distress and the poverty of the "righteous" in this world. Why are they in distress? For two reasons: (1) because of an enemy or because of an oppressive government, and (2) because of combinations of circumstances. But these are *exceptions* and they are not the kind of exceptions which invalidate the rule. The evil, most of which is public evil or group evil, should be resisted. The combinations of circumstances which constitute misfortune should be (and can be) alleviated by mutual assistance, or as it is called, charity.

Generally, mission activity has failed. Great efforts do not fail without cause. The cause, in this case, is the degeneracy of the message, for this life and the life to come, compared with what the message should be. Until the day comes that mission effort attacks the evils of untrue religions as prophets of old attacked the worship of Baal, and proclaims the magnificent benefits currently and afterwards of the Christian religion, no super-salesman will ever sell the Christian religion to large numbers of the "heathen." But today most "mission work" is nice and brotherly; sissified; no harsh words said. We shall in future issues present evidence on this.

DECLARATION NO. 6

(a) Promote a program for this life (1) which will be distinguishable (antithetical) from a non-faith program, (2) which will bring good temporal results, and (3) which, therefore, cannot discredit Christianity's message in matters beyond this life; and (b) resist all programs borrowed from non-Christian sources which science and experience will reveal as unsound for this life, and which will consequently discredit Christianity's supernatural message.

Christianity, in many instances, makes itself ridiculous. It borrows, for example, some of its "social" program from non-Christian sources. It runs with that ball harder than the anti-Christians or the half-Christians themselves. Maybe these imitative Christians (both the real and the spurious) will carry this foreign ball across the goal line. But it will be the wrong goal line. The victory will be a calamity. Christianity will eventually be discredited. Why believe what Christianity says about a distant heaven if it is completely wrong about important matters here and now in this life?

Responsibility for Articles

Articles in PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM will be signed by names or initials. The individual only is responsible for the content of the article. Liberty of opinion beyond the accepted Declarations is encouraged among the founders of the Progressive Calvinism League.

Our Prospective Members

We wish to have members, or if not members, at least readers.

We wish to have members who are intellectuals, that is, anyone who is influential in spreading ideas. We are eager to have as members, preachers, teachers, professional men, students.

We are eager to have as members that great body of common-sense people who are farmers and businessmen and employees.

What we advocate will be written so that everyone who reads carefully will be able to understand.

If our program to influence people fails, it will be our fault; nobody else's. Nor will it be the fault of the content of the message. We truly believe that the smarter a man is the more he holds himself responsible for success.

How did *we* learn what we think it will be so valuable for others to learn? By good fortune. Our lot has been that for us "the lines have fallen in pleasant places" and we have, in the providence of God, had opportunities to learn what has not been available to others. As the lepers in the gates of Samaria who discovered the flight of the Syrian host and who said, let us go into the city and tell the good news, so we have stumbled onto many things as good as the plunder of the Syrian camp for a starving city.

Subjects Which Will be Discussed

We shall not be side-stepping the "hot" issues. Sooner or later we plan to discuss subjects such as the following:

1. The difference between the Christian and the Communist Laws of Love
2. The Causes of Prosperity
3. The Legitimate Authority of Government
4. Unionism
5. Discrimination
6. Inflation
7. Common Grace and Social Science
8. Birth Control and Migrations
9. The Introduction of the Doctrines of the French Revolution into Present-Day American Society
10. The Foundations of Society — What Holds it Together
11. The Pre-Fall World a la Moses
12. The Parallelism between Biblical Morality and Sound Social Science
13. The so-called Neo-Calvinism of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner

14. The Social Ideas of Reinhold Niebuhr
15. The Advance of Positivism — the Introduction of Comtian Epistemology into the Christian Churches

We shall not work over these subjects in the abstract. We shall devote special attention to what has been written and what has been omitted in various Calvinist publications. That at least will often be our starting point.

F. N.

A Description How Most of Us Feel About the Future Life Compared With the Present Life

The old preacher liked to talk about the Second Coming of Christ. He liked to send up the petitions: "Lord Jesus, come quickly." He would call to the attention of the congregation that this should be the petition of all believers. If you could not pray for this, there must be something wrong with you. There is much of value in this reflection. But there were some members in my family who had a little trouble with that. Life was so interesting; business was good; all eight children were well placed in business, in jobs, in the professions or in college; there was a granddaughter, and two grandchildren on the way; one son was about to get married. No wonder that my wife did not wholeheartedly join in with the old minister about the coming of the Lord "quickly." She wanted to see the other grandchildren first. The son wanted to realize his wish and consumate a happy marriage. And since I did not need much imagination to conclude that the rest of the family would like to remain on earth for some considerable time to come, I got busy with the subject in the middle of the night and wrote to my wife and children in substance as follows:

Father of Jesus, Love Divine,
What rapture will it be,
Prostrate before thy throne to lie
And gaze and gaze on Thee.

Verse five of hymn number 340 from the Psalter Hymnal is one of my favorites. I like to sing it and I like to sing it, chest expanded.

But nearly every time I sing it, I observe strange phenomena: eyes kind of moist, rain drops (or something) running down my cheeks, voice not too clear, chest not expanded to full capacity. But, it is my favorite hymn, and I want to sing:

Prostrate before thy throne to lie
And gaze and gaze on Thee.

It looks mighty good to me that some blessed day, I shall lie there prostrate and gaze and gaze.

But when — today or tomorrow? If I may express my wish in the matter I would like to petition: Not yet, but after several years.

You see my life-work is not finished (at least so I think). I have several plans to carry out. There is the well we are planning to drill and the pump, the pressure tank and the several pasture sprinklers we are going to set up. I would like to see it all completed and see how much water we will get from this well. And after that I would like to see the abundant crops we can raise. Then we have the Black Bench Ranch in San Gorgonio Pass. We have just started disking and after that we will have to work the land with the noble blade, to make ready for the planting of the crop of oats this fall. If we then could have abundant rains and good growing weather, we could have a bumper crop next year. My, that is something to look forward to! Remember all these nice heifers we expect to freshen September/October? What pleasure will it be to have them come in with a four-and-one-half to six-gallon yield of milk daily. That would bring our average production over five gallons per cow daily. Something to be proud of. We just started two new milk routes on the other side of Cajon Pass. It is all rather promising. If all these enterprises may be crowned with God's blessing, we will prosper. I like to prosper, and God promises prosperity in the way of obedience to his commandments (see

the first chapter of the book of Joshua). Not that I would like to keep it all for myself, but, you know my wife and children also like to enjoy prosperity and the good things of this earth. And then, forget not the joy of giving, helping people, and the joy of promoting various causes of the Kingdom of God. How blessed it is to give of time, of money, of energy!

I enumerated mostly material interests. There are so many worthwhile things besides. Take our children, and grandchildren, either already born or yet to come. Three children married, five to go. It is a parent's delight to see the children established in their own home. God thus ordained it and parents love to see their children settled, establishing homes, building families. How happy are Christian parents when their children find good mates, mates who fear the Lord. When the young people make it their motto and their choice:

As for me, I and my house,
we will serve the Lord.

And then the grandchildren come! What joy to see these little ones! To see them grow, learn to walk and to talk. It makes you look forward to a family reunion ten years hence. To see your children with their husbands and wives, and their children. All covenant children, wearing the baptismal sign and seal of the covenant on their forehead. What many good things to look forward to. All these young men and women who have reached maturity, placed in the business world or in the professions, where they can work to the glory of God.

Before my death, or before the return of the Lord in glory, before I prostrate myself before His throne in the hereafter to gaze on Him, I would like to have the desire of my heart and see all the above fulfilled.

Is it sinful of me to desire that and to pray for its fulfillment? No! We are created to live, not created to die. Therefore we want to live to see all the good things enumerated to happen. I hate death. Death is our enemy.

> But, maybe the Lord is not planning to grant unto me all these desires and petitions. Maybe He wants me to be through with the good things of this earth. Through with dairies, farms, wells, crops, business. Through with wife, children, grandchildren. Maybe He wants me to come home, to the "House with many mansions," where Christ is; where I can see my Savior face to face. If it would be God's design not to leave me here any longer but to call me to my Father's house; if He would say to me: I have heard your petition, your sins are all forgiven, your debt is paid, and now come home at once — would it be so bad if I would have to forego farms and business, wife and children in order that I may lie prostrate before His throne and gaze and gaze on Him?

Thus wrote I to my children. I am sharing it with you fathers and mothers not out of sentimentality, but out of covenant-consciousness.

J. V. M.

A Great and Growing Inferiority Complex of Calvinists

Culture! How badly we do want it! We are not happy about our Christianity and we are not happy about our Calvinism unless it is "cultured."

This basic motivation betrays a deep inferiority complex. That term, inferiority complex, means that we wish to think well of ourselves and also that we wish others to think well of us, but we sense that we are not worthy of being admired as we wish to be admired, that in fact, we are over-rating ourselves. And so we put on airs, we become aggressive, we are sensitive to criticism, or we engage in pretenses of illness, and a whole series of so-called maladjustments. We have an inferiority complex; the Dutch have a much more descriptive term, *minderwaardigheidsgevoel* (a feeling of being less worthy or inferior). In this cultural business the fundamental psychology is that we are already somewhat ashamed of our religion.

One way to acquire the culture we feel we need is to associate our religion with Greek philosophy. And so there is a great interest among some Calvinists in ancient Greek ideas. We ourselves are admirers of the great Greeks, especially Socrates, Plato and Aristotle.

Nevertheless, *we* do not need Greek philosophy to keep our Calvinist morale up. And we do not think highly of the Calvinism which props the Christian religion with the ideas of the Greek philosophers.

> We can state it pretty simply. Our fourth Declaration reads: (*a*) *Promote a single rule of morality; and* (*b*) *reject a dual rule, namely, one rule for individuals and a conflicting rule for groups.*

Now what did Plato put in his dialogue called *The Republic,* Book III? This:

> Then if anyone at all is to have the privilege of lying, the rulers of the State should be the persons; and they, in their dealings either with enemies or their own citizens, may be allowed to lie *for the public good.* But nobody else should meddle with anything of the kind. . .

Just as ordinary businessmen, we do not believe what Plato writes.

And what is the real "joker" in the statement. It is four words which we have italicized, the words "for the public good." That dangerous phrase masks every public iniquity which people tolerate and accept. A great Netherlander, Groen van Prinsterer, called attention to the fact that every piece of evil perpetrated by the French Revolution was defended as being "for the public good." Those words always betray self-deception or masked malignancy. The principal is: the end justifies the means, and there is always an assumption of a dual moral rule.

We ourselves hold to Declaration Four. We hold to *one* and the same standard of morality for both individuals and the State, Plato to the contrary notwithstanding.

Scripture is far more "simple" than Plato. Where in Scripture is lying justified! Scripture does not talk about *ends* or *purposes*. It talks about *means*. It has no hypocrisy about the ends justifying the means.

In short, we plan to stick to Scripture, and we have no inferiority complex about Calvinism or Christianity even though we do not prop them up with Greek philosophy.

We hope you will not miss Plato's point nor our point. The "*public* good" is something *different from* "*personal* good." Plato recommends a dual morality. We believe in a single morality. Read again our Declaration Four.

F. N.

One of the Dead and Inert Ideas in Calvinism, Namely, "Loving One's Neighbor"

Scripture is not a book on psychology, but it is nevertheless based on sound psychology.

Modern psychology has rediscovered basic psychological truths clearly indicated in Scripture. Those psychological truths had largely been lost by religious people. What happened was this: the religions kept the husk of the idea and lost the kernel. By keeping the husk but losing the real and valuable idea religion made itself ridiculous.

This is what happened:

1. Sound psychological ideas in religion and life became confused and dead and inert.
2. The science of modern psychology discovered the real idea, or better said, rediscovered it.
3. Psychologists then ridiculed (not entirely fairly) the bastardized religious idea.
4. Then they gave their correct idea (the old Scriptural idea) a new name, a new nomenclature. The

new *name* helped persuade themselves and others that they really had a brand new idea, (but it was not).

5. The public then took to the new ideas as a duck to water. In many places psychology substitutes for religion, and psychologists for pastors.

What has happened? Christianity first loses grasp of reality (in ideas); someone else rediscovers it; he exaggerates the dull and stupid shift in meaning which religion has tolerated; religion becomes a laughingstock; he gives a new name to the real idea; he parades his "new" idea; the public catches on and accepts the sound idea. In short, Christianity has been poorly served by those who profess it.

Take "confession" for example. Scripture calls for wholehearted honest confession and abandonment of sin. Scripture calls the alternative (namely, not to confess) bad. But in course of time "confession" of sins becomes a mere routine. It means practically nothing to Christians.

Then what does psychology do? It discovers that a bad conscience can destroy a man by making him melancholy and depressed. He may "go crazy." And so psychologists have returned to the "confession." They put you on their couch. They tell you to relax. And they tell you to talk — just talk. Get off your mind what is on your mind! ! ! You must be purged of your sense of guilt! Then you will be normal again. If he considers it necessary, the psychologist will declare your evil deed was not an evil deed. They will try to purge you of a sense of guilt by telling you your sin was not bad.

Christianity "discovered" the necessity of confession long ago. Instead, however, of minimizing evil it said: The sin *is* sin, but God will forgive.

Christianity was ahead, and when not lost in dead and inert ideas, is still ahead.

The late philosopher, Alfred North Whitehead, very highly regarded among some Calvinists, wrote the following in *The Aims of Education* (we have substituted *Calvinism* for *education*):

> In the history of [Calvinism], the most striking phenomenon is that schools of [Calvinism], which at one epoch are alive with a ferment of genius, in a succeeding generation exhibit mere pedantry and routine. The reason is that they are overladen with inert ideas. . . Every intellectual revolution which has ever stirred humanity into greatness has been a passionate protest against inert ideas. . .

It is not education only nor Calvinism only that is woodenish with dead and inert ideas. As in the case of religious psychology, religion generally has become foolish and a laughingstock, particularly in social science ideas.

Consider the statement — Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. It will be developed in later issues of PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM that Christians practically never get beyond the mere parroting of the words. In the next issue we intend to analyze that term.

F.N.

An Address to Talented Students

Whoever reads the *Calvin College Chimes* (Grand Rapids, Michigan) and other student publications realizes that there are highly talented young men and young women in the student body.

But it is also soon noticed that any hopes among those brilliant and ambitious and devoted persons to perform great deeds and make epoch-making contributions to Calvinism may possibly be disappointed. It is evident that Calvinism's youth is in a rut. Youthful work is running headlong into a blind alley. The old foundations have long had as big a superstructure built as the foundations can carry. The concrete is only six inches thick. There is need for an 18-inch foundation. Many a smart young Calvinist may be headed for frustration and depression, or may go off on a tangent.

The surest evidence that a basically new approach is needed is the literature of Calvinist youth. That literature is mostly concerned with mere form; style has superseded content; the play on words has taken over the role of penetrating thought; the tread-

mill paddles carry no new water from the Nile onto the land; in fact, the question may well be asked, has the literary style of present-day Calvinist youth become unattractive and sometimes even ridiculous.

But Calvinist youth does not lack ability. There is reason to believe that there are potentially thorough and powerful and conscientious thinkers among our present youth.

And how is a person to get out of an arid and sterile intellectual climate? Read something new and different. It may be wrong. But expose yourself to new ideas. Wisdom and truth are not discovered except there be the friction of conflicting ideas.

Read PROGRESSIVE CALVINISM to get something different to stimulate your mind.

F. N.

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